

HARBOR AT MILWAUKIE.

[To accompany bill] H. R. No. 496.]

JUNE 10, 1842.

Mr. HOWARD, from the Committee on the Public Lands, made the following

REPORT:

The Committee on the Public Lands, to whom was referred the memorial of the Milwaukie and Rock River Canal Company, beg leave to report:

That, by virtue of the act of June 18, 1838, granting a quantity of land to the Territory of Wisconsin, to aid the Milwaukie and Rock River Canal Company in opening a canal from Milwaukie to Rock river, (which grant was made of the alternate odd numbered sections on the route of the canal,) about one hundred and forty thousand acres of land were appropriated, and have since been duly selected by the Territory. The present petition requests that twenty thousand acres of this land may be sold, and the proceeds applied to the improvement of Milwaukie harbor, on Lake Michigan. The want of good harbors on that lake has been long a subject of just complaint. The town of Milwaukie began to be settled in the year 1834. Its imports in 1835 and 1836 amounted to \$588,950, and its exports to \$26,145. In 1841 its imports amounted to \$1,805,277, and its exports to \$286,777. These imports consist of merchandise purchased in the Eastern markets—lumber, shingles, salt, pork, fish, flour, and provisions; the exports are chiefly of flour, wheat, hides, lead and shot, copper, and sundry other articles. The lead and shot exported in 1841 were valued at \$75,546, the flour at \$69,276, and wheat at \$25,073.

From the capes of Green bay to Milwaukie, a distance of about two hundred and twenty-five miles, along the western coast of Lake Michigan, there is not a harbor into which a vessel or steamboat of any considerable tonnage can enter; and even here vessels will find little safety during storms, without a considerable expense in improving the harbor. The only ports to be relied upon on the eastern or Michigan coast of the lake are at the mouth of Grand river, opposite the town of Milwaukie; at the mouth of the Kalamazoo river, about thirty-five miles further south; and the mouth of the St. Joseph's river, about forty-five miles still further south. But these three last-named harbors are all obstructed by sand bars at their entrance, and require similar improvement. The lake itself is about four hundred miles long and sixty broad; and, for about two hundred and twenty-five miles of this distance, the navigator meets with no harbor into which he can safely run for shelter against the severe storms

which at times prevail upon it. The Government has made improvements at only two points, viz: at St. Joseph's, in Michigan, and at Michigan city, in Indiana, both which places are on the southeasterly coast, and fully deserving of the attention they have received, and of further appropriations, as are, indeed, the harbors at the mouths of the Kalamazoo and Grand rivers.

The consequences of this want of harbors on Lake Michigan have been of a disastrous character. Within eight years past the number of lives lost on that lake has been one hundred and eighteen, the number of vessels wrecked and destroyed ninety, and the amount of property lost \$1,065,650. In 1841, twenty-five human lives, twenty-eight vessels, and property to the amount of \$145,500, were swallowed up in that lake. As an evidence of the injustice of abandoning the policy which began in 1826, and which had in view the gradual but efficient improvement of the navigation of these inland seas, until the summer of 1832 no steamer had ever penetrated into this lake. In 1840, eight splendid steamers made their regular trips from Buffalo to Chicago, a distance of more than one thousand one hundred miles, earning for their owners, on account of the Lake Michigan trade merely, \$201,800. The value of the steamboats now engaged in this trade will not fall short of \$630,000, and the sail vessels engaged in the same trade are estimated to be worth \$700,000. Notwithstanding an annual average loss of property amounting to more than \$120,000 upon this lake, the trade upon it has increased, within eight years, more than one hundred and thirteen fold. It is a part of the great thoroughfare through which pass the agricultural and other products of the Northwest and West to the Eastern markets, and which affords striking facilities for the continuance and increase of that immense commerce, whose treasures, constantly augmenting, are rapidly adding to the wealth of the East, while, with equal rapidity, they are pressing forward the work of civilization and settlement into the West. That it is the duty of the General Government to encourage and foster these growing interests, no patriotic statesman will deny. They constitute a bond of strength and of union which no future calamity that may befall the nation can sever or impair; and ages to come will attest the wisdom of that policy by which the constitutional powers of the Government were exerted in aid of the commerce of the lakes. That commerce already amounts to more than \$25,000,000 annually, and contributes vastly to the national revenues. No human foresight can prescribe its limits, and, as long as the people interested in it shall retain their characteristic energy and enterprise, it must continue to grow in importance.

The committee herewith report a bill.